

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 09706 220909Z
ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 SP-02 INR-05 L-01
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 9706

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND IPAC

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, MY
SUBJECT: REFUGEE INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE MIA'S.

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 9496 (B) STATE 300296

1. REFUGEE CLAIMING TO HAVE HAD A FACE-TO-FACE CONFRONTATION WITH TWO AMERICANS BEING HELD PRISONER BY THE CURRENT VIETNAMESE REGIME (REFTEL) WAS INTERVIEWED ON 18 DECEMBER BY EMBASSY REFUGEE OFFICER.

2. REFUGEE SOURCE IS LIEU THI LAN, A 22-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, WHO RECENTLY ARRIVED IN MALYSIA. BY BOAT, FROM VIETNAM. SOURCE WAS RATHER VAGUE IN RECALLING DETAILS AND SEEMED GENERALLY UNIMPRESSED BY HER ALLEGED ENCOUNTER WITH THE AMERICAN PRISONERS.

3. SOURCE REPLIES TO DETAILED QUESTIONS REFTEL B AS FOLLOWS:

- A. DATE OF ENCOUNTER WAS O/A 28 OCTOBER 1977.
 - B. BOTH PRISONERS WERE CAUCASIANS.
 - C. BOTH PRISONERS TALLER THAN AVERAGE U.S. HEIGHT AND WERE THIN AND PALE. BOTH HAD BLONDE HAIR AND BLUE EYES. THEIR
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AGES WERE BETWEEN 20 AND 30. BOTH WORE CAST-OFF ARTICLES OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY UNIFORMS. BOTH SPOKE VIETNAMESE FLUENTLY. NO OTHER PHYSICAL QUALITIES COULD BE RECALLED BY SOURCE.

D. NO OTHER WITNESSES TO THE ENCOUNTER ARE KNOWN BY SOURCE TO HAVE ESCAPED VIETNAM.

E. SOURCE RELATED THAT WHILE COMMUNIST GUARDS WOULD, AT TIMES, PUSH AWAY THE CROWD GATHERED AROUND THE AMERICAN PRISONERS, THE VIETNAMESE WOULD EDGE BACK SOON AFTER AND RESUME DIALOGUE WITH THE TWO MEN.

4. INTERVIEW WITH SOURCE AND HER BROTHER, PHAN VAN TRAC, AUTHOR OF THE LETTER LEADING TO INTERVIEW, REVEALED ADDITIONAL DETAILS. SOURCE RELATED THAT THE AMERICANS ARE HELD NEAR THE CO DO ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING. EACH DAY THEY ARE MARCHED OUT FOR LABOR DETAILS. ON 28 OCTOBER THE PRISONERS WERE HALTED IN THE MARKETPLACE FOR ABOUT 2 HOURS DURING WHICH THEY CARRIED ON A DIALOGUE WITH A CROWD OF CURIOUS VIETNAMESE WHO HAD GATHERED AROUND. THE AMERICANS, WHO COULD SPEAK VIETNAMESE WELL, RELATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN TAKEN PRISONER QUOTE A LONG TIME AGO UNQUOTE. THE AMERICANS REPORTEDLY SAID THEY HAD BEEN ON A MISSION TO PAY AMERICAN TROOPS WHEN THEIR HELICOPTER CRASHED AT VON RIENG. SOURCE SAID VON RIENG DISTRICT IS ABOUT 50 KM WEST OF CAN THO. AMERICANS REPORTEDLY WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHEN THEY TRIED TO FIND FOOD DURING THEIR ESCAPE AND EVASION EFFORT THREE DAYS AFTER THE CRASH, THEY WERE TAKEN PRISONER BY THE COMMUNISTS. SOURCE SAID THAT ONE AMERICAN TOLD THE CROWD HIS NAME. SOURCE CANNOT REMEMBER THE NAME BECAUSE QUOTE IT WAS TOO LONG UNQUOTE. SOURCE SAID THAT THE AMERICAN SPOKE TO THE MARKETPLACE CROWD FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS. SOURCE SAID SHE WAS ONLY PRESENT FOR A HALF HOUR OF THE DIALOGUE.

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5. OTHER THAN WHAT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN THE FOREGOING, NO OTHER INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED FROM THE SOURCE AND HER BROTHER. DETAILED QUESTIONS WERE ASKED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS REGARDING THE PRISONERS' PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS, PARTICULARS OF THEIR CAPTURE, AND THEIR IDENTITY. SOURCE WAS VERY VAGUE. BROTHER WAS MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE IN ASSERTING WHAT HE THOUGHT BUT SOURCE, HERSELF, COULD NOT PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION. CARE WAS TAKEN NOT TO LET BROTHER OR INTERVIEWER PUT WORDS IN HER MOUTH. INTERVIEWING OFFICER IS VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE QUALIFIED. HE NEVERTHELESS USED AN INTERPRETER TO ENSURE COMPLETE COMPREHENSION OF QUESTIONS.

6. PERTINENT TO THE EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW INFORMATION IS FACT THAT BROTHER OF SOURCE, WHO WROTE INITIAL REPORT (REFTEL A) OF THE SIGHTING, IS CURRENTLY HELD IN USSPICION BY THE CURRENT VIETNAMESE REFUGEE CAMP ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE. MR. PHAM VAN TRAC IS SAID BY THE CAMP COMMITTEE TO BE THE FORMER SECRETARY OF MAI CHI THO, CURRENT "DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES" IN SAIGON. THE PULAU BESAR REFUGEE CAMP COMMITTEE FEELS TRAC MAY HAVE BEEN SENT TO MALAYSIA TO QUOTE STIR UP TROUBLE AMONG THE REFUGEES UNQUOTE. TRAC MAY HAVE VOLUNTEERED HIS

INFORMATION, AND THAT OF HIS SISTER, TO IMPRESS U.S.
PERSONNEL IN HOPES OF ENHANCING HIS CHANCES OF BEING
ADMITTED TO THE U.S.

7. SECOND REPORTED SIGHTING OF AMERICANS HELD BY COMMU-
NISTS AFTER APRIL OF 1975 FOLLOWS IN SEPTEL.
MILLER

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NNN

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